

**CLAIMS**

1. A process for the production of a benzoic acid ester by reaction of a benzoic acid component selected from benzoic acid or a benzoic acid ester with alcohol in the presence of a catalyst, characterized in that tin(II) oxide  
5 in combination with a phosphorus(I) compound is used as the catalyst.
2. A process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that phosphorus(I) acid or a salt thereof is used as the phosphorus(I) compound.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that a fatty alcohol or a hydroxyfatty alcohol containing 6 to 22 carbon atoms,  
10 preferably 8 to 18 carbon atoms and, more particularly, 12 to 15 carbon atoms or a mixture of several of these alcohols is reacted as the alcohol.
4. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that a linear primary alcohol is reacted as the alcohol.
5. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that an  
15 ethoxylated and/or propoxylated fatty alcohol is used as the alcohol.
6. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that a glycol is used as the alcohol.
7. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the alcohol is used in excess and, more particularly, in a molar excess of  
20 10 to 30% over the benzoic acid component.
8. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that benzoic acid methyl ester is used as the benzoic acid ester.
9. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that the reaction of the benzoic acid component with alcohol is initially carried  
25 out with heating under normal pressure in a first step (A), subsequently continued under reduced pressure at elevated temperature in a second step (B) and then completed in a high vacuum at elevated temperature in a step (C).
10. A process as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that the benzoic  
30 acid component, alcohol and phosphorus(I) compound are introduced first

and at least part of the tin(II) oxide is added at elevated temperature in step (A) after the beginning of heating.

11. A process as claimed in claim 9 or 10, characterized in that the reaction in step (A) is continued to a residual content of the benzoic acid component in the reaction mixture of 5% or less.

12. A process as claimed in claim 10 or 11, characterized in that the remaining tin(II) oxide is added in step (B).

13. A process as claimed in any of claims 9 to 12, characterized in that the reaction in step (B) is continued to a residual content of the benzoic acid component of 1% or less in the reaction mixture.

14. A process as claimed in any of claims 9 to 13, characterized in that the reaction in step (C) is continued to a residual content of the benzoic acid component of 0.1% or less in the reaction mixture.

15. A process as claimed in any of claims 9 to 14, characterized in that the catalyst is precipitated after step (C), more particularly by addition of phosphoric acid, and filtered off.

16. A process as claimed in any of claims 9 to 15, characterized in that the tin(II) oxide is used in a quantity of 0.01 and 0.6% by weight and more particularly 0.03 to 0.1% by weight, based on the benzoic acid component, and the phosphorus(I) compound is used in a quantity of 0.02 to 1% by weight and more particularly 0.07 to 0.3% by weight, based on the benzoic acid component.

17. A process as claimed in any of claims 10 to 16, characterized in that 60 to 95% and more particularly 75 to 90% of the tin(II) oxide is added in step (A) and the rest in step (B).

18. A process as claimed in any of claims 9 to 17, characterized in that the reaction is carried out at a temperature of 150 to 290°C and more particularly 200 to 240°C.